

Advocacy Toolkit

*Advocating for Change in
the Iowa General Assembly*



**Prepare for your
day at the Capitol
& helpful hints on
continuing your
advocacy**

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For more information please contact:



www.idaction.org

Iowans with Disabilities in Action (ID Action) is a nonpartisan, statewide initiative dedicated to generating greater civic and political participation among people with disabilities.

1-866-432-2846



www.infonetowa.org

infoNET is a free service available to people of all abilities who want to become more informed and effective advocates.

contactus@idaction.org

About This Toolkit

This toolkit provides helpful information to prepare for your day at the Capitol and helpful hints on continuing your advocacy when you're back home. When advocating for issues you feel strongly about, don't forget:

- **Your opinion matters!** This is your government and the process is better because you are involved.
- **Do not be intimidated.** You can be impressed by the building, the history and the institution, but you do not need to be intimidated when speaking to your elected official. Their job is to represent you. The only way they can do that is if you tell them what's on your mind.
- **All voters and constituents can have a voice and make a difference.** Lobbying isn't just for professionals and insiders.
- **Your advocacy assures that important issues are not forgotten.** Your representatives are learning about and making decisions on hundreds of bills each year, making it difficult to keep track of every issue.
- **There are endless ways to advocate!** In addition to face-to-face meetings, use mail, email, Facebook, Twitter and your local newspaper to get your thoughts heard.
- **Relationships are very important to increase your influence.** Be sure to follow up your face-to-face meeting with continued correspondence. Have a goal of building a long-term relationship.
- **Elected officials need you!** Each day they are pressured to make important decisions, and they could use your encouragement and support. Remember, they are human too.

You can be impressed by the building, the history and the institution, but you do not need to be intimidated when speaking to your elected official.



Which Legislators to Visit

Start by talking with your legislators. If you don't know who your legislators are, don't worry, you can look them up. Visit www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators and enter your address.

Once you have talked to your legislators, try talking to legislators who serve on committees that handle issues of interest to you. For example, if you are interested in transportation issues, talk to a legislator who serves on the Transportation Committee. If you are interested in HCBS waiver waiting lists, talk with a legislator from the Health and Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee. A list of committee members can be found in the Guide to the Iowa Legislature.

Possible House & Senate Committee members you may want to talk to

.....

House Human Resources Committee

House Transportation Committee

House Education Committee

House Appropriations Committee

Senate Human Resources Committee

Senate Transportation Committee

Senate Education Committee

Senate Appropriations Committee

Joint Health & Human Services

Appropriations Subcommittee

Tips for Meeting with Legislators

Legislators have many responsibilities. A normal day for legislators begins at around 8:45 a.m. Their days are filled with debate in the House or Senate chambers, caucuses (which are not open to the public) and committee meetings (which are open to the public). You will need to be patient when trying to meet with your legislators.

The schedules for each day are listed on boards in front of each chamber on the second floor of the Capitol. The House Lobby Lounge includes television sets with scrolling subcommittee and committee meetings. Subcommittees are taped to a bulletin board in the Senate Lobby Lounge.

Legislators do not have staff or offices. They each have a desk on the floor of the House or Senate, and each legislator has a clerk that helps them keep up with daily paperwork. The clerks are often family members of the legislators or friends. They can help you locate your legislators if they are not available when you send in your notes.

FIRST, go to the House or Senate chamber.

Both are located on the second floor of the Capitol. The House is on the north side and the Senate is on the south side. If you look at the Law Library in the middle of the second floor, the House is on your right and the Senate is on your left.

NEXT, you will need to send a message to your legislator through the doorkeeper.

- DO NOT try to walk into the chambers to locate your legislator. The public is only allowed in the chambers when they are with a legislator, and only after they get permission from their leaders. There is a doorkeeper system that requires you to fill out a “slip” and send it in to your legislator.
- The slip is yellow for the House, pink for the Senate. They are located at tables directly in front of the chamber entrance. You will be given some at your Capitol Day training.
- The slip requires you to fill in your name, the name of the legislator you wish to contact and their SEAT NUMBER (not to be confused with their district number). Legislators are listed alphabetically on a sheet of paper located on the board above the table, which also lists legislator seat numbers. Seat numbers are also listed on pages 18-19 of this guide.
**If you come with a group, only fill out one slip for the group. (Instead of listing all the names of people there, just say “a group from ____ ” or “17 people from ____.”)*

Tips for Meeting with Legislators

- Circle the option called “waiting to see you.” It is also good to write on the note where you are from (for example, Jane Doe of Belmont, Iowa) so legislators know if you have come a long way to see them. Also, include your cell phone number so they can reach you before you leave the building if they cannot see you immediately.
- Hand the slip to the doorkeeper and wait for a response. Sometimes it may take your legislator 10-15 minutes to come out. (They may be finishing up a call or conversation before coming out to talk to you.)
- If your legislator is not available or not in their seat, a page or doorkeeper will come back out and call your name. You may need to listen closely as the rotunda can be loud. If your note does not come back out it means your legislator was there and will be out soon to talk to you.
- Sometimes a staff person will come out to speak to you if the legislator is occupied. Be polite and treat this staff person as you would the legislator — a lot of times the staff person is a friend, relative, daughter/son or spouse of the legislator.
- Be prepared and be patient. The Capitol can be noisy and crowded, and you may feel jostled if the crowd that day is particularly large.

Sample message slips:

The Senate

Date: _____ Time: _____
To: _____
Seat No: _____
Message: _____

_____ is at the rear of the chamber and requests to see you:
____ in the lounge
____ at the door

House of Representatives

Seat No: _____
Representative: _____
☐ or clerk: _____

Name: _____
of: _____

1. Is waiting to see you;
2. Has left literature;
3. Has left the following message:

Date: _____ Time: _____
FRONT DOOR

Tips for Meeting with Legislators

**Hello,
I'm Jane Doe
from Belmont,
Iowa with the
ID Action
group.**

If you ARE able to meet with your legislator at the Capitol:

- **Don't be nervous.** Be yourself. Remember your legislators are there to represent you!
- **Greet your legislator with a smile.**
- **Be brief. Legislators have very little time during session.** Use an “elevator speech,” what you would say if you only had the time to talk while riding in an elevator with them. Use our message development sheet on page 15 to help you get started.
- **Use your legislator's titles,** Senator or Representative. Think of it as their first name.
- **Clearly identify yourself.** State your name, where you are from and the group you are with at the Capitol that day.
- **Focus on one, maybe two issues.** If you mix in too many issues, it will overwhelm them. Understand that it is a tough budget year, but make sure they understand why your priorities are important.
- **Be courteous.** Ask them what they might do to help you with your priority issue. (Is there something you might be able to do to help us with this? Is this something you could support? What do you recommend we do to help make this a priority?)
- **Thank them** for their support or for their consideration if they are not ready to commit to a position.
- **Don't burn bridges!** You may not agree with your legislator on this issue, but they might be there for you on the next one. You don't need to let them off the hook — tell them you'll keep trying to get

Tips for Meeting with Legislators

them information that will help them reconsider their position. But remember that advocacy is about building a relationship — and trust — with your elected officials.

- **Send them a follow-up note!** A short note or email from you to follow-up on your conversation is an excellent way to become a resource for future communication, and it is a great reminder of your visit. Remember, you only have to remember one person's name (your legislator); your legislator has to remember all of your group's names and others that are at the Capitol that day. Emails or letters are a good reminder for them.

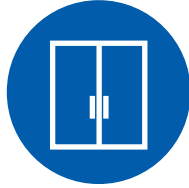
If you **DON'T** get to talk to your legislator:

- If your slip comes back out and your legislator is not available, take the time to write a short "sorry I missed you" note that states very briefly the issue you wanted to talk to them about.
- It is okay to continue writing on the back of the note if you run out of room.
- Circle the option "Has Left the Following Message" and send back the note.
- Be sure to mark the time of day and date that you left the note.

If you are not able to talk to your legislator, send the note back in and ask to have it left on their desk. Write something like:

- "I was here today with ID Action and [your local group]. I live in [city] and would like to take a few minutes today to talk to you about our priorities. I will be here until [time] should you want to call me on my cell phone [555-5555]." OR
- "I will e-mail you more information about the issues I came to discuss."

Capitol Tips for Advocates



Entering the Capitol

You can enter the Capitol at the west or south sides of the building. You will need to go through a security scan. All bags and briefcases will be scanned. A map of the Capitol complex is included on page 22.



Coats

There are many coat racks where you can leave your coat while at the Capitol. These are located by the entrances and by the elevators.



"Guide to the Legislature" Books

These books are available in the Legislative Information Office, which is located by the stairs on the ground floor. These books include contact and other information about legislators and legislative offices. These are free, one per person.



House and Senate Chambers & Other Locations

The "rotunda," where the House and Senate chambers are located, is on the second floor. The rotunda is the open circle in the middle of the floor (surrounded by railing). You enter in the basement near the cafeteria (the "ground" floor) and can use either the stairs or elevators, both of which can be accessed in the central part of the Capitol.

House chambers are located on the north side of the rotunda. Senate chambers are on the south side. The House and Senate Lobbyist Lounges (where there are chairs and speakers so you can listen to debate) are next to the stairs on the second floor.

Capitol Tips for Advocates

On the third floor are the “galleries” where you can watch House and Senate debate. Galleries are now accessible to all. There is a designated area for wheelchairs, but only a few can enter at a time. You can take pictures from that level, but you are not allowed to use a flash. You must be quiet during debate and cannot hold signs or demonstrate in any way while seated in the galleries.

The governor’s office is located on the first floor.

The State Law Library (where there are Internet-connected computers available to the public) is located on the west side of the second floor. It is one of the most beautiful libraries in the country and is often the site of national news broadcasts during the presidential caucuses.

Elevators

There are two main elevators located in the central part of the building on the north and south sides of the main staircase. If you need to get to meetings behind the House and Senate chambers, there are elevators and stairs located on the ground floor at the end of the north and south hallways.



Restrooms

Restrooms for both women and men are in the basement (ground floor). The men’s restroom is near the east entrance of the building; the women’s restroom is near the west entrance. There is an additional women’s restroom on the 2nd floor (near the steps on the House/north side).



12 Steps to Successful Advocacy

It is important to prepare before you talk to your legislators.

1

Identify Your Cause

- What do you want? Focus on the solution, not the complaint!
- Ask for what you want, but be willing to compromise.
- See the big picture.
- Define the problem. What do you want fixed?
- Is there more than one solution?

2

Do Your Homework

- Know the issue and make it real.
- Gather facts and expert information.
- List the pros and cons of your solution.
- Form a response to the cons.
- Track legislation and learn the legislative process.

3

Know Your Legislators

- Visit the legislative website (www.legis.state.ia.us) or local library for help.
- Contact your county auditor or your state/local election commissioner.
- Connect on social media. (Most legislators have an online presence on Facebook, Twitter or a website.)

4

Rally the Troops

- Who else supports your cause (legislators, businesses, organizations)?
- Enlist their support.
- Decide on common themes so your messages resonate.
- Help your legislators understand why your position is important to their constituents.
- Fight where your legislators live through grassroots at home.
- Be prepared to give your legislators information they can use.

12 Steps to Successful Advocacy

-
- Use the media.
 - Work as a group — strength in numbers.
 - Consider rallies and other public events to get your message out.

**Build Support
for Your Cause**

5

-
- City council/mayor/county officials
 - Businesses/civic organizations
 - Child welfare
 - Legislators
 - Lobbyists
 - Media/news editors

**Determine
Who Can
Help You**

6

-
- Attend city council meetings.
 - Make appointments with the person you selected in Step 6.
 - Make telephone calls.
 - Visit your State Capitol — and lobby!
 - Write letters or emails.
 - Invite your legislator to a community event or go to a fund raiser.

Communicate

7

A worksheet is included on page 15 to help you develop your message before talking to legislators. In short, you should:

- State the problem.
- State the solution.
- Put the issue into context with a personal story.
- Ask for help.
- Say thank you!
- Follow up.

**What to Write
and/or Say**

8

12 Steps to Successful Advocacy

9

Keep it Short & Simple

- Be courteous and respectful.
- Be brief, concise and to the point.
- Be informative and truthful.
- Be positive. Always make your case without being critical of others.

10

Support Those Who Support You

- Join organizations sympathetic to your cause.
- Support candidates who support you.
- Remember there are no permanent friends or permanent enemies.
- Do not take traditional friends for granted.
- Never write off a legislator just because of party affiliation.
- Don't make legislative enemies — you might need them in the future.

11

Remember, It's Not Personal

- Listen to your opponents with the same respect and attention you want.
- Try to understand their position.
- Keep channels of communication open.
- Seek compromise and be diplomatic.

12

Don't Give Up or Give In

- Remember Rome wasn't built in a day.
- Be persistent and consistent.
- Aim for consensus rather than victory. Be willing to settle for making progress.
- Stay committed. You have a compelling, energizing reason to keep fighting until you accomplish your goal.

How to Tell Your Story

Message Worksheet

Before you talk to legislators, use the following worksheet to develop your message.

Your Issue/Story (in 50 words or less):

What do you want them to do: (in 50 words or less):

Three key points to make:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Follow these tips when talking or writing to your elected officials.

1. Be Polite. Treat policy makers with respect, even if they don't agree with you.

2. Be Persistent but Patient. Policy change takes time. Don't give up.

3. Practice and Prepare. Practice talking to your legislator — it really does help. Think about what you want to say before you meet with, write or call them. Use the Message Worksheet on the next page.

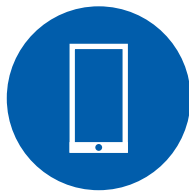
4. Be Clear. Stick to a simple and clear message. Get to the point quickly, and don't forget to let them know what you want them to do.

5. Be Personal. These real life examples mean a lot to legislators. They help them look at issues differently and put a human face on them.

6. Be Honest. Never lie. You want to be a reliable source of information to your policy makers.

Advocating From Home

When you're back at home, there are several ways you can continue to let your legislators know how you feel about the issues that you care about. You can call them, write letters or emails, meet with them face-to-face and organize others to advocate, too. Use the method you like best and are most comfortable doing.



Phone

- Call your legislators at the Capitol.
Senators: 515.281.3371
Representatives: 515.281.3221
- Call your legislators at home when the session is done. Ask your legislators how to call them after session ends.
- Call Governor Branstad and encourage him to help solve the problem: 515.281.5211.
- Call friends, families and others you know and ask them to call!



Face-to-Face

- Go to local forums. An updated list of forums can be found at www.infonetiowa.org.
- Invite legislators to local events, open houses or plan a discussion with friends.
- Ask your legislator to meet and talk about issues over a cup of coffee.
- Visit the Capitol!

Advocating From Home

Writing

- Write or email your legislators. The address is:
Sen. _____ or Rep. _____
State Capitol
Des Moines, Iowa 50319
- Email legislators using our Grassroots Action Center at www.infonetiowa.org.
- Ask your legislators how to stay in contact after session ends. (Then do it!)
- Write or email the governor. Emails can be sent through his website at www.governor.iowa.gov/contact. Regular mail can be sent to:
1007 East Grand Ave.
Des Moines, Iowa 50319
- Write a Letter to the Editor to the *Des Moines Register* or your local newspaper.
Des Moines Register Editorial Writers
PO Box 957
Des Moines, Iowa 50304



Organize Others

- Talk to your friends, family and others to build support. Ask them to call, write or contact their legislators.
- Speak to community and civic groups.
- Organize informational meetings and invite others.
- Get others to attend local forums, or plan your own!
- Plan your own Capitol Day!
- Contact ID Action for more ideas and grant opportunities



Legislators

House of Representatives

Representative	Seat Number	Representative	Seat Number	Representative	Seat Number
Ako Abdul-Samad	23	Dave Dawson	76	Chris Hall	78
Marti Anderson	59	Dave Deyoe	62	Curt Hanson	94
Rob Bacon	48	Cecil Dolecheck	65	Mary Ann Hanusa	70
Chip Baltimore	12	Jack Drake	46	Greg Heartsill	15
Clel Baudler	26	Nancy Dunkel	36	David E. Heaton	6
Terry C. Baxter	35	Abby Finkenauer	9	Lisa Heddens	91
Bruce Bearinger	73	Dean Fisher	28	Lee Hein	64
Liz Bennett	25	John Forbes	77	Jake Highfill	42
Deborah L. Berry	89	Greg Forristall	68	Steven Holt	51
Brian Best	29	Joel Fry	34	Bruce L. Hunter	93
Darrel Branhagen	4	Ruth Ann Gaines	21	Daniel A. Huseman	45
Timi Brown-Powers	19	Mary Gaskill	63	Charles Isenhardt	43
Josh Byrnes	54	Tedd Gassman	61	Dave Jacoby	82
Gary Carlson	49	Pat Grassley	16	Megan Jones	22
Dennis M. Cohoon	67	Stan Gustafson	79	Ron Jorgensen	24
Peter Cownie	81	Chris Hagenow	66	Bobby Kaufmann	52
				Jerry A. Kearns	69

Senate

Senator	Seat Number	Senator	Seat Number	Senator	Seat Number
Chaz Allen	17	Michael Breitbach	14	William A. Dotzler Jr.	5
Bill Anderson	46	Jake Chapman	16	Robert E. Dvorsky	49
Jerry Behn	40	Mark Chelgren	10	Randy Feenstra	42
Rick Bertrand	44	Mark Costello	18	Julian B. Garrett	20
Tony Bisignano	19	Thomas G. Courtney	35	Michael E. Gronstal	41
Joe Bolkcom	31	Jeff Danielson	1	Dennis Guth	22
Tod R. Bowman	7	Dick L. Dearden	37	Rita Hart	13
Chris Brase	23	Bill Dix	36	Robert Hogg	47

Legislators

Representative	Seat Number	Representative	Seat Number	Representative	Seat Number
Daniel Kelley	1	Jo Oldson	90	Chuck Soderberg	60
Jarad J. Klein	53	Rick Olson	98	Art Staed	71
Kevin Koester	8	Scott Ourth	75	Quentin Stanerson	10
John Kooiker	11	Kraig Paulsen	14	Sharon S. Steckman	85
Bob Kressig	80	Ross Paustian	50	Sally Stutsman	41
John Landon	32	Dawn E. Pettengill	5	Rob Taylor	18
Vicki S. Lensing	37	Todd Prichard	86	Todd E. Taylor	95
Jim Lykam	87	Ken Rizer	72	Phyllis Thede	33
Mary Mascher	97	Walt Rogers	83	Linda L. Upmeyer	100
Dave Maxwell	27	Patti Ruff	38	Guy Vander Linden	31
Charlie McConkey	55	Kirsten Running-Marquardt	88	Ralph C. Watts	44
Brian Meyer	7	Sandy Salmon	3	Beth Wessel-Kroeschell	96
Helen Miller	92	Thomas R. Sands	47	John H. Wills	20
Linda J. Miller	2	Mike Sexton	74	Cindy Winckler	39
Norlin Mommsen	17	Larry Sheets	30	Matt W. Windschitl	84
Brian Moore	56	David Sieck	57	Mary Lynn Wolfe	13
Zach Nunn	40	Mark D. Smith	99	Gary Worthan	58

Senator	Seat Number	Senator	Seat Number	Senator	Seat Number
Wally E. Horn	43	Janet Petersen	15	Tom Shipley	26
Pam Jochum	27	Herman C. Quirnbach	3	Amy Sinclair	30
David Johnson	38	Amanda Ragan	33	Roby Smith	28
Tim L. Kapucian	48	Ken Rozenboom	32	Steven J. Soddors	45
Kevin Kinney	11	Charles Schneider	12	Rich Taylor	25
Tim Kraayenbrink	24	Brian Schoenjahn	9	Jack Whitver	8
Liz Mathis	29	Jason Schultz	4	Mary Jo Wilhelm	21
Matt McCoy	39	Mark Segebart	2	Brad Zaun	6
		Joe M. Seng	50	Dan Zumbach	34

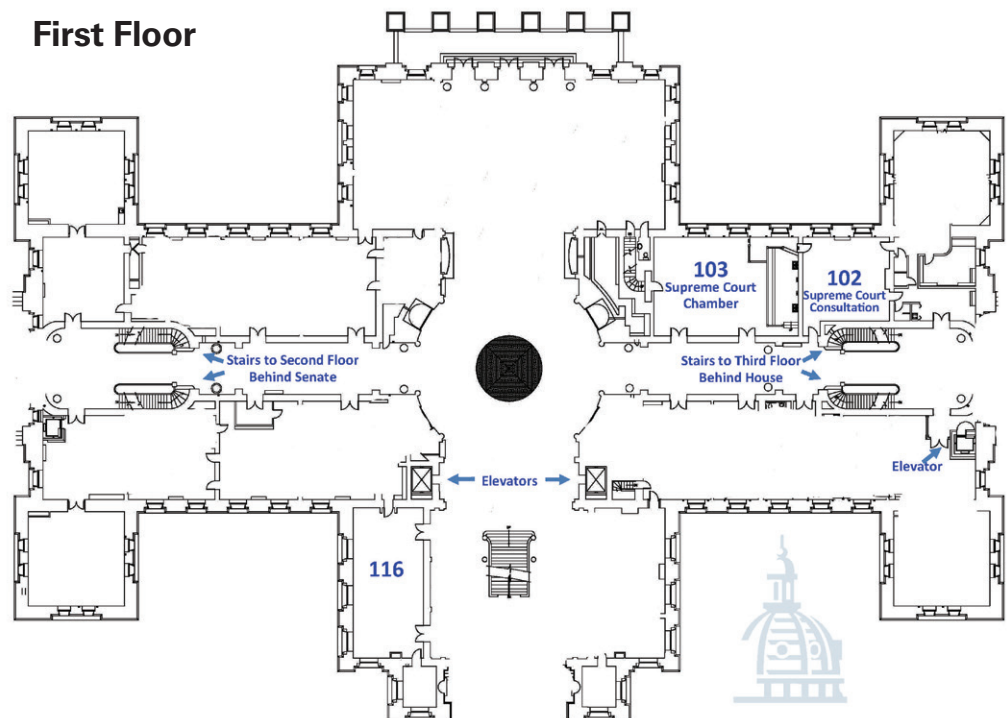
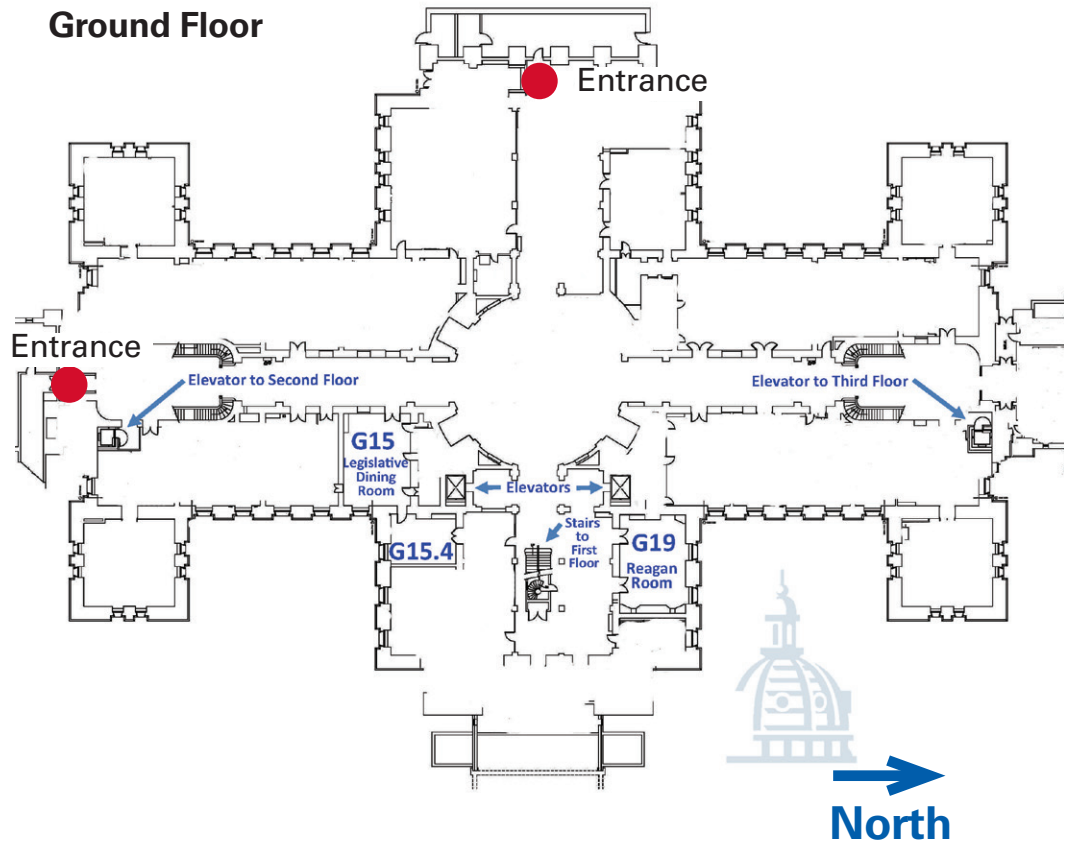
Navigating the Capitol

Entrances

Public entrances are located on the ground floor of the Capitol on the south and west sides of the building. All members of the public must pass through a security scan upon entering the building.

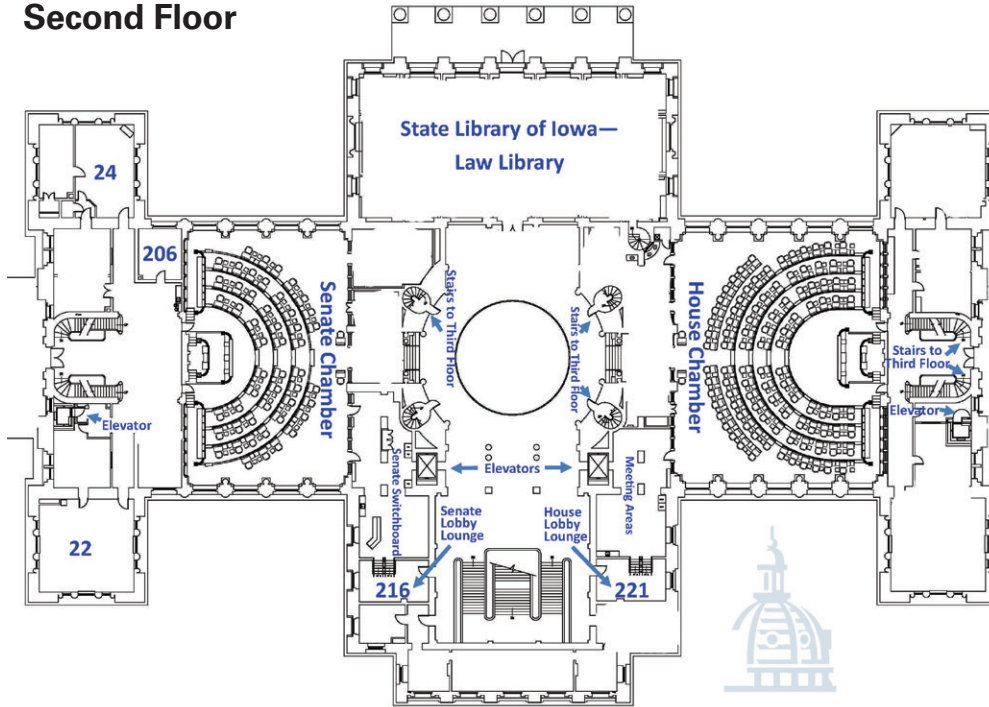
Legislative Committee Room Map

These maps indicate the location of the legislative committee meeting rooms on each floor of the Capitol.

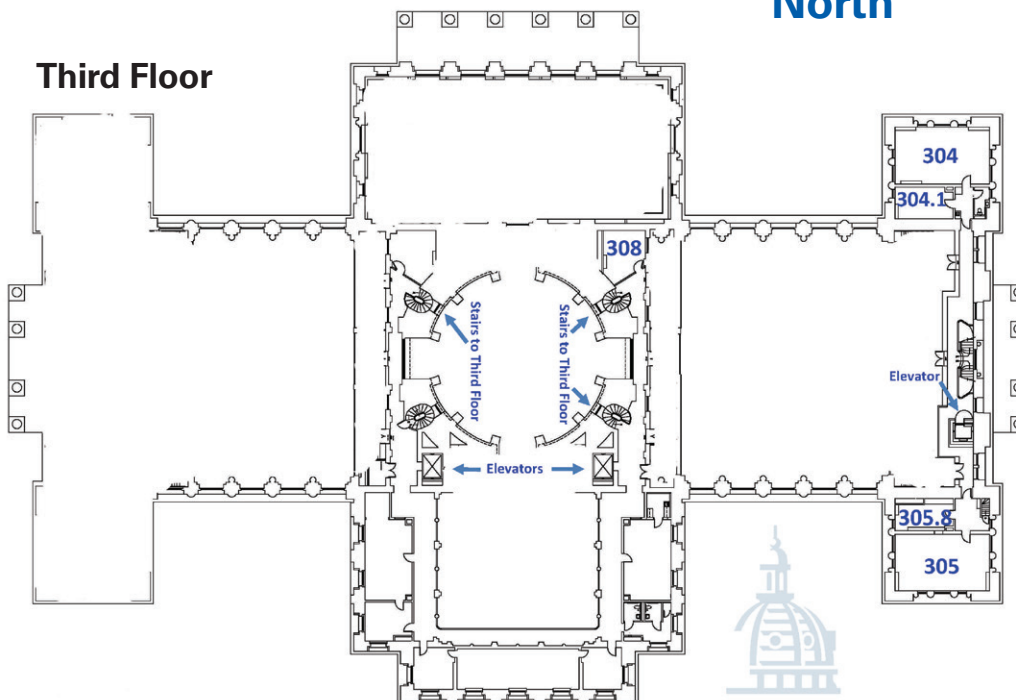


Navigating the Capitol

Second Floor



Third Floor



Cafeteria

The Capitol Café is located on the ground floor. It is open for breakfast until 9:30 a.m. and open for lunch until 1:30 p.m. There are vending machines for soda, water, and snacks near the west entrance.

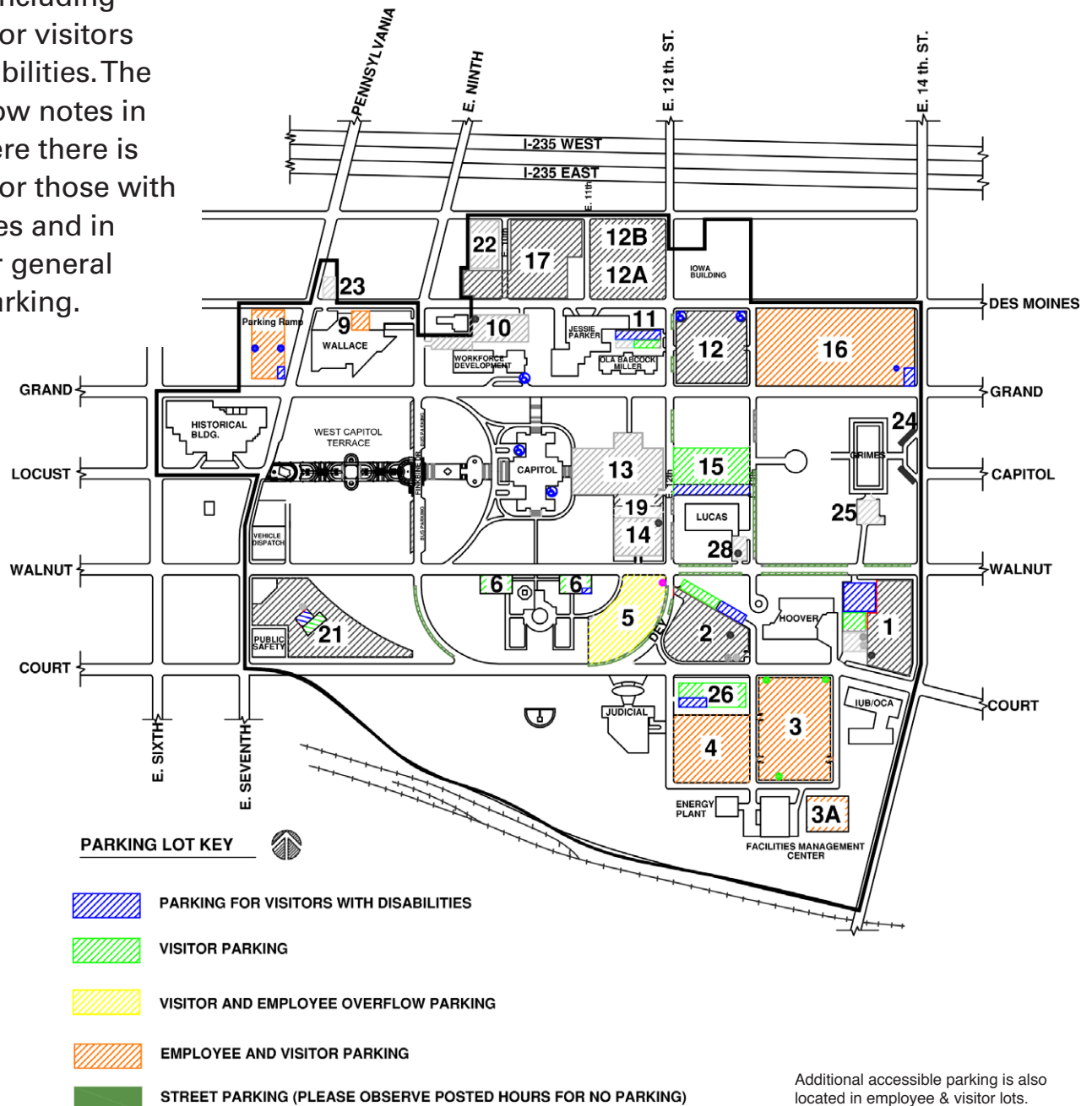
Capitol Tours and Gifts

You must arrange a Capitol tour in advance of your visit if you want the “official” tour. There is a gift shop located in the center of the ground floor where you can buy gifts or souvenirs. You will also find information for self-guided tours, coloring books, and other historical facts that are free for visitors.

Navigating the Capitol


Parking

There are several parking options for visitors to the Capitol, including parking for visitors with disabilities. The map below notes in blue where there is parking for those with disabilities and in green for general visitor parking.



Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



District 1

infoNET

Iowa's Disability Policy Resource.

www.infonetiowa.org

idaction

We're counting on you

www.idaction.org

1-866-432-2846

contactus@idaction.org